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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3900
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 0003
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2535
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2657
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1150
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 0234
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1926
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 2281
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2706
RUEHKI/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0529
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 5134
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0068
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 5616
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 0021
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1813
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000024

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. WALCH
DRL FOR N. WILETT
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/09/2019

TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC PHUM ECON EMIN RS ZI
SUBJECT: MILITARY EXPANSION FUELS DIAMOND CHAOS XXXXXXXXXXXX

REF: A. IIR 6 926 0058 09

1B. 08 HARARE 1016

1C. 08 HARARE 1035

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXXXX, poloff met with XXXXXXXXXXXX, XXXXXXXXXXXXXX region that contains the diamond-rich Marange fields, to discuss violence in the region as well as recent developments in the turbulent Marange diamond trade. XXXXXXXXXXXXXX described how the military expansion in XXXXXXXXXXXXXX in late November has been displacing the police and diverting the diamond flow from the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe to the Zimbabwean military. This has not deterred the continued brisk diamond trade involving foreign buyers, including most prominently the Lebanese. END SUMMARY.

Shootings Continue as Bodies Pile Up

¶12. (C) The tribal chief XXXXXXXXXXXXXX, met with poloff in Harare XXXXXXXXXXXXXX and confirmed that military and police shootings in Marange are continuing, as security forces tighten their control over the diamond-rich area. This was seconded by a report we received from a human rights group in the region (REF A). According to the report, during police and military Operation Hakudzokwi, (Shona for "you won't come back") which was aimed at clearing individual panners from the area, over 200 bodies turned up at Mutare Provincial Hospital Mortuary, Old Mutare Mission Hospital, Sakubva District Hospital, and private mortuaries. Many of those bodies arrived with fatal gunshot or dog bite wounds

and were tagged "BID Marange" or "brought in dead from Marange."

¶3. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX many of his people have been killed, beaten, and arrested for dealing in diamonds. The villagers had entrusted their diamond findings to XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX because he owned a safe and they thought his tribal status would be respected; however, the police forced him to turn over the village's diamond stash to the security forces. XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX is now in hiding in Harare. He also told us XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX he had been harassed, arrested, and beaten beat out . XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX END NOTE.)

Military Expansion Displacing the Police

¶4. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX confirmed that the military has increased its numbers in the region and now exceeds the police presence by a large margin. He suspected the increase stemmed from concern that the power-sharing negotiations between ZANU-PF and the MDC might culminate in the awarding of the Home

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Affairs ministry--which includes the police department--to the MDC. This would result in a tremendous loss of wealth and patronage that helps to maintain the Mugabe regime. Therefore, he believed that the military, which would remain under ZANU-PF control in the event of an agreement between the two parties, was seeking to consolidate its authority.

¶5. (C) Digging by panners, according to XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, is continuing in Marange largely under the supervision of the military. The typical practice is for soldiers to supervise and escort groups of panners as they dig. Then at the end of the day, any diamonds found are apportioned between soldiers and diggers. XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX said that military helicopters fly in daily and transport many of the diamonds to bases near Harare, where presumably they are taken by senior military commanders.

Gono May Have Been Cut Out of the Deal

¶6. (C) Prior to the military expansion in late November, it was well known by locals that Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) governor Gideon Gono had representatives in Mutare buying diamonds with bundles of freshly-printed Zimbabwean notes (Ref B). XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX claimed that the military has now barred Gono's operatives from the region and that diamonds are no longer being sent to the RBZ. All diamond purchases are now being conducted solely in foreign exchange. (NOTE: According to an article in the state-controlled newspaper, the Herald, Tendai Makurumidzi, a well-known Gono buyer who uses the alias "Gonyeti" was arrested sometime in November and had three of his vehicles seized. END NOTE.) XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX explained that it used to be common to see 4x4 vehicles leaving XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, but now the roads have deteriorated to the point that access is only possible by foot or helicopter. Vehicular access to the greater area is also being controlled by police and military roadblocks, according to XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

Foreign Buying Unabated

¶7. (C) While Gono's access to diamonds may have been compromised, XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX said that many diamonds are still being sold to foreign diamond buyers in Mutare and over the border in Mozambique by a mix of panners, police, and soldiers. In particular, Lebanese buyers have set up shop in large numbers in Mutare and typically pay for the diamonds with U.S. dollars. In order to operate safely, the Lebanese have formed profitable relationships with senior military and police officials in the region. Marginally more reputable buyers from Europe and other regions prefer to stay in Chimoio in Mozambique. Chimoio affords these buyers protection from Zimbabwean police and soldiers who commonly

seize cash, diamonds, and vehicles from them in Mutare, but that safety is offset by higher diamond prices.

COMMENT

¶8. (C) We previously reported on a meeting between Gono and the Russian diamond monopoly ALROSA (Ref C) in November. Recent press reports, corroborated by Embassy sources,

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indicate that Mugabe is planning a trip to Russia in January to discuss mining investment opportunities. With the GOZ desperate for forex, such a trip could involve discussion of a Chiadzwa diamond deal between Zimbabwe and Russia. END
COMMENT.

MCGEE